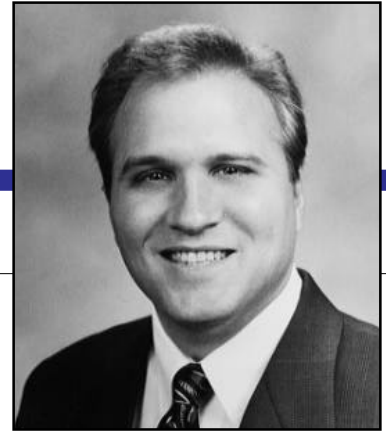


Representative Tim Hickel

Session report



June 1997

The most efficient session in 40 years

Dear neighbors,

The 1997 legislative session was a landmark. For the first time in 40 years, we completed our work on time. That hasn't happened in a budget-writing year since 1957. Special sessions have been the rule rather than the exception. This year, for the first time in several generations, taxpayers will not pay the extra staffing and workload costs of a special session.

At the same time, we passed major policy initiatives, including juvenile justice reform, welfare reform and property tax relief.

This letter outlines highlights of the just-completed session. Please take a moment to read through it. I welcome your views on these and any other issues. If you have concerns or views you'd like to share, or if you need help dealing with a state agency, please call or write. I'll be happy to hear from you.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim".

Tim Hickel
State Representative



Toll-free Legislative Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

The 1997 Legislature

What the media said:

"Bipartisan effort defies predictions of gridlock"

— The News Tribune, 4/28/97

"A legislative session to write home about"

— Seattle Times 4/29/97

"Rousing success for Legislature"

— Everett Herald, 4/28/97

"An action-packed, productive legislative session"

— The News Tribune, 4/28/97

"GOP triumph in Legislature"

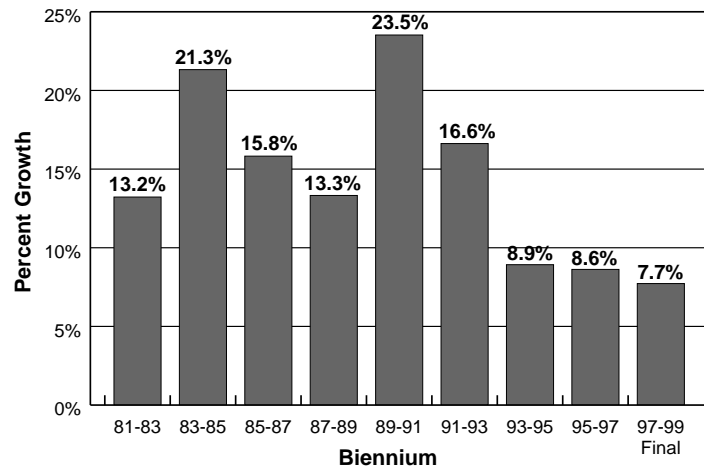
— Everett Herald, 4/28/97

Spending less, saving more

Our budget for 1997-99 is \$19.07 billion. **This is the smallest state budget increase — 7.7 percent — since 1971.** The final budget is \$112 million below the Initiative 601 spending limit. In the three years since Republicans gained a majority in the state House of Representatives, we have consistently held spending down. And by staying below the 601 lid, we reduce spending that much *more* over time — a considerable savings for taxpayers.

Spending slowdown State budget growth since 1981

General Fund - State Expenditures
Biennial Percent Change



Education

We promised to properly fund education, and we have kept our word. Our budget increases education funding by 7.5 percent over the biennium — an increase that stays ahead of enrollment and exceeds the inflation rate (about 2.5 percent). We increased funding in the following specific areas:

SLICING UP THE BUDGET — PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Total public school spending
'95-'97 \$8.28 billion
'97-'99 \$8.90 billion

Annual per-pupil spending
'97 \$4,561 per student
'98 \$4,635 per student
'99 \$4,729 per student

Specific increases

Teacher salary increase
(3 percent on 7-1-97) — \$176 million

School construction — \$75 million
Technology grants — \$39 million

Instructional materials purchases — \$20 million
(average: \$458 per classroom)

We also established clear priorities in K-12 education, with an emphasis on academics, discipline and choice. We sharpened the focus on reading in the primary grades with greater teacher training and better assessments to identify students who need early assistance. We gave teachers and school districts more latitude and authority to address discipline and gang problems.

Finally, we encouraged higher achievement standards by removing bureaucratic obstacles that discourage academic innovation. Legislation I sponsored this year gives parents, teachers and administrators the flexibility to exempt their schools from unnecessary rules and regulations that can hinder creative approaches to achieving higher standards.

Tomorrow's education at today's prices

We know that young people with college degrees have a better chance to find family-wage jobs. But working parents are understandably concerned about the rising costs of higher education. This year, we've instituted a program that allows parents to purchase future college credits at current tuition rates.

Parents can purchase up to four full years of college credits as their child matures, and then apply them toward tuition at any of our state colleges. The credits purchased would not shrink over time. What you pay for today is what you will receive tomorrow. This is an excellent way to provide broad access to education for our young people. The program is still being developed, but it should be up and running by next year.

1997 Session report

Juvenile justice

We have completely reformed the way we protect our neighborhoods from young criminals. Our juvenile justice bill, which passed unanimously, enacts the most significant changes in 20 years. This is a major achievement, and a true victory for our citizens.

Here are some of the highlights:

- **Accountability**

16- and 17-year-olds will be prosecuted as adults in the following cases: murder, rape, drive-by shootings, first-degree robbery, first-degree child rape, first-degree burglary with a previous conviction, and any crime in which the offender uses a firearm.

- **New sentencing system**

The bill replaces the current "point system" with sentencing ranges based on two factors: 1) the seriousness of the current offense; and 2) the number of prior felony and misdemeanor convictions.

- **Sentencing alternatives**

Include boot camps, home detention, community service, and mandatory school attendance.

- **Parental involvement**

Parents of juvenile offenders will be required to participate in court proceedings involving their children.

Welfare reform

This year saw the culmination of a four-year struggle to reform welfare. The Legislature passed and the governor signed a bill that replaces our broken welfare system with provisions that emphasize personal responsibility and work. Welfare recipients will abide by the following conditions:

- **Time limits on benefits** (five years)
- **Requirements to work**, search for work or perform community service

- **Child care assistance** for working parents
- **Job training**
- **Teen parents** must live at home and progress toward a diploma or GED to receive benefits

We have fully funded this program, which we call the Personal Responsibility Act of 1997. Coupled with changes to the federal welfare system, we believe we will help families to free themselves from the cycle of dependency.

Transportation

Our transportation budget provides funding for existing projects, as well as ongoing maintenance. We also approved a performance audit of the Department of Transportation, which will give us a clearer idea of how to use our existing revenue more efficiently.

The following local improvement projects will continue to receive funding in the transportation budget:

- **Federal Way Park and Ride Lot #2** (\$440,112)
- **SR 99** — Junction at South 279th Street (\$42,900)
- **SR 509** — Corridor design analysis (\$1,596,881)
- **I-5** — Improvements between Pierce County line and Tukwila (\$7.99 million)



Rep. Hickel makes a point on the House floor.

Capital budget

The following local projects were approved for funding in the capital budget for 1997-99:

- **U.W./Tacoma branch campus** (\$19.7 million)
- **Stadium Way** — Seismic and infrastructure repair (\$2.92 million)
- **Highline Community College** — classroom/lab building (\$390,000)

Small business tax relief

This year, we voted to complete the rollback of a heavy tax increase on small businesses imposed in 1993, during the Lowry administration. The first half of the rollback was passed in 1996 and vetoed by then-Gov. Lowry. The Legislature overrode the veto. We voted for the second half of the rollback this year. The repeal takes effect in July 1998.

Tax relief • *Property taxes*

This year, the Legislature approved \$414 million worth of tax cuts. One of our first actions of the session was a vote to prevent an immediate property tax increase in January. We extended a 4.7 percent reduction in the state property tax levy through 1997.

Several other property tax relief measures were passed by the Legislature, but vetoed by the governor. In response, we have placed our proposals on the referendum ballot this fall. The voters will make the final decision on whether to accept \$220 million worth of property tax relief.

Our proposal would make the 4.7 percent state levy reduction permanent. It would limit the property tax “spikes” that result from unexpected assessment increases. Also, it would limit property tax increases at the local level. Currently, local governments are allowed to increase property taxes by a maximum of 6 percent each year. Our proposal would limit increases to 6 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower (inflation has been running at about 2.5 percent).